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$500 Prize Story. "The Diary of A White Kaffir."

The Black Cat

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The Diary of a White Kaffir.
$500 Prize Story.
James O. Fagan.

The Bird from Cape Horn.
Frank Lillie Pollock

The Conjured Plantation.
Zitella Cocke.

For the Honor of the Cloth.
Evelyn Raymond.

Eph Follett's Monument.
Josephine Spencer.

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The Black Cat

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The Diary of a White Kaffir.*

BY JAMES O. FAGAN.

ITH a tent wagon drawn by a dozen oxen, urged by a black driver armed with a lash forty feet long, and guided by a black "fore-looper," an Afrikander hunter was leisurely making his way along the borders of Zwaziland, in the summer of 1879. Encamped one fine evening on the border of Lake Crissey, in the district of New Scotland, the oxen were secured for the night, the fire was burning brightly, and the hides of the blesboks and zebra shot during the day were spread out upon the grass.

Pulling from the hot ashes several steaks cut from the meat of the slaughtered game, and washing down this plain but appetizing fare with steaming, fragrant coffee, the hunter and his companions stretched themselves upon the ground to enjoy an after-supper smoke. A few whiffs of the strong Kaffir tobacco were quite enough for even a seasoned smoker, inhaled as it was from a peculiarly primitive water-pipe, of ingenious native construction. A tunnel was made by the black ox-driver in the clayey soil,

* This is one of two stories that won the $500 prize in THE BLACK CAT prize story competition ending March 31, 1898.

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some two inches deep and ten or twelve feet long, stopped at one end by a huge pipe bowl, and the tunnel being filled with water. At the end farthest from the bowl several branch tunnels were constructed, with small holes in the ground for mouth-pieces.

As the weary hunters reclined upon the sod, pulling at this rude nargileh, the barking of the dogs gave warning of the approach of strangers, and through the deepening dusk the figures of two tall, armed Kaffirs were seen, coming toward the wagon. The chief of the hunting party slowly arose and stretched himself, while the strange Kaffirs held their spears aloft and greeted him with the salutation:

"Inkos, inkosi umkulu; inkosi mareng!" implying that the white man was a chief and a great one, and that they acknowledged his rank.

Bidding the visitors sit by the fire, the hunter passed them a snuff-box, carried for just such occasions. His keen and comprehensive glance took in at once all the details of their simple dress and equipment, and he recognized the shield and headdress of the famous Tiger regiment — the Zwazi King's own body-guard. The black warriors were well fed with steaks from the coals, while the hunter patiently waited for them to speak. At length one of the Kaffirs delivered this message:

"We come from the King, who lives in the great Kraal over among the hills where the hot springs boil and bubble. One day the scouts reported that a white man was hunting the zebra and shooting the sea-cow by the shores of the great lakes where the black men come for their willows and their salt. And the King said, 'Tell the white hunter to come to the Kraal of the Zwazi. I will treat him well. He shall come and go in peace. Let him come empty-handed, so that he may take away many presents, and in this way he shall know that my heart is good, and that my country is great.' Such is the King's message, and we are here to be your guides."

Understanding and speaking their language fluently, the sportsman readily understood that the invitation was genuine, and did not hesitate to trust himself within the royal Kraal of the ferocious Amazwazi ruler, and, under the skilful guidance of the two

warriors, reached the King's headquarters within three days, and encamped just outside the Kraal.

The following morning the Afrikander was summoned to the presence of the Kaffir potentate, whom he found seated on a low bench outside his principal hut. Two of his chiefs were with him. After shaking hands with the white man and thanking him for the honor of his visit, he said:

"I have sent for the white hunter because I wish him to do a service. Long ago a man came to my country who was just like a Kaffir, but he was white. He was a doctor, and cured many of their sickness. I gave him wives and cattle, and made him a chief over many. He proved to be a great warrior, and taught the Kaffirs many things. We called the man 'Ibomvu,' on account of his red eyes. He won battles and always came home with much cattle and ivory. More than that — he could bring rain and sunshine at will.

"After a while, he rebelled and stole girls from a brother chief. I then said to him, 'You must die; choose now whichever you will — the spear, the poison, or the Roller.' The man laughed at my messenger, and said 'Let it be the Roller.' At the birth of the present moon he died. In the presence of tens of thousands of my people he ran well and bravely, but in the end the avenging rock overtook him, and nothing was left of the white Kaffir but a stain on the causeway.

"And now we are afraid of his gods and his sorcery; we are afraid of his weapons and his bottles, and so we pray the good white hunter to remove these things from our midst, that the blight may not wither our cornfields, nor the plague bring desolation to our homes."

The hunter, well acquainted with the peculiarities of African character, well knowing that no good would come of a refusal, and risking whatever harm might result from compliance, readily consented to remove the belongings of the "White Kaffir," while vaguely wondering who the victim of the tragedy so darkly hinted at could have been. and the King, on his part, promised to spare and protect the wives and children of the late object of his vengeance.

Rewarded for his good offices by the present of a yoke of beau-

some two inches deep and ten or twelve feet long, stopped at one end by a huge pipe bowl, and the tunnel being filled with water. At the end farthest from the bowl several branch tunnels were constructed, with small holes in the ground for mouth-pieces.

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Rewarded for his good offices by the present of a yoke of beau-

tiful oxen and provided with a bright young Kaffir as a servant and guide, the white man resumed his hunting trip, taking with him the arms, the simple chemical paraphernalia and the few books and papers that had aroused the superstitious fears of the Kaffir King.

An inventory of the effects of "Ibomvu, the Red-eyed," however, disclosed nothing of unusual interest, with the exception of a note-book, or diary, and the more that that was studied by the hunter, in his moments of leisure by the flickering campfire or in the shady retreat from the noonday glare, the more absorbing it became. Some of the entries in this curious journal were in Portuguese, some in Dutch and some in English, and the later portions were liberally interspersed with Kaffir words. To the surprise and gratification of the discoverer, the entries were carried along to the day of the writer's death. The more the book was studied the more apparent it became that its owner had been a most interesting man, both physically and intellectually, and the tale unfolded was a most extraordinary one — perhaps without a parallel.

When his trip was over and opportunity came for a careful digest and translation of the strange diary, the Afrikander hunter culled from its pages and arranged in chronological order the most significant portions of the story of a remarkable career, narrated, as nearly as translation would permit, in the man's own words:

1840. — Brazil is a great country, if you count the acres, and Bahia is a great city, if you count the heads — principally black ones. The face of the city, from the sea, is the face of a huge rock. Some of the houses are up among the clouds and some of them are down at the water's edge. One having the courage to climb through and over the upper town cannot help crossing the Street of the Little Strangers, where the most conspicuous building in sight is a convent — large, square and white, with mere slits or crevices for windows, like a fortress. The entrance to this institution is through an archway, high and deep, and at the end of the passage are great oaken doors, bound with iron. To the right of these great doors, two or three granite steps lead up to a niche in the wall, in front of which is a sliding screen. At a certain hour every morning this screen is withdrawn, revealing a low table, on

which stands a basket, attached to a rope dangling from above. A muffled and hooded figure comes stealthily and quietly along the passage. It is a woman, evidently young, consequently pretty. She carries a bundle. Kneeling before the alcove, she awaits the withdrawal of the screen. Unwrapping an infant, she places it tenderly in the basket, throws in jewels and money and raiment, and last of all a card, with a number and a date. Remaining only long enough to weep a little and pray a little, she turns quietly away.

So much and no more do I know about my origin and antecedents. Around my neck hangs a silver token with the inscription:

BAHIA.
NOSSA SENHORA DA MISERICORDIA.
No. 77.

. . . . . .

1865. — I have arrived at the thinking age, and my thoughts are as poison to my mind — they drive me nearly crazy at times. I am like a specimen of some extinct and curious fauna, or an archaic palimpsest, at which the world wonders, and places in a museum. Since I left the convent I have been repeatedly examined, scraped, scrutinized and catalogued, until I am sick of my miserable personality.

I have a mirror, and I hold it before me. My hair is white, short, curly and silky, and grows in tufts My nose is flat, my cheekbones high, and my skin a sickly cream color. Some people take me for a leper, and half the world fears me. The pupils of my eyes are red, and where they should be white they are pink.

Perhaps it is that I may better realize these horrible facts that I have been carefully brought up, educated, and persistently taught that I possess an immortal soul! Was not the good priest well aware of my peculiar physiognomy when he informed me that my mother was one of the most beautiful women in the city, and my father — a religious secret?

. . . . . .

Today I had a visitor, a noted doctor and a man of science, named Peixotto. After a rambling talk on science in general and ethnology in particular, he intimated that he was seeking a specimen of an albino — purely in the interests of science, of course! Would I sell my body at death for 500 milreis? Or, better still, would I accept 1,000, and agree not to postpone my departure from this life beyond five years?

Would I? Well, of course I would! Do I not hate the world, and every white face in it?

The good Father has vouched for my honesty, the wise doctor has paid me the money, and published his bargain in the *Jornal da Bahia*, and I have shipped as cook on board an American vessel, bound for South Africa. I have also put a notice in the *Jornal* that I am off for a five years' cruise.

. . . . . .

1869. — Money flies in Africa, as elsewhere, and I am now poverty-stricken. They say there is gold in the interior. I will go and see.

A transport rider has hired me to drag his cattle over the hills and through the mire. I don't like it. I shall run away.

The white rascals pursued and caught me, after a while, tied me to a wagon wheel, and gave me twenty lashes from my own whip. Then they tied my hands behind my back, buried me in a hole in the sand, up to my waist, smeared my face and neck with molasses, and left me to the flies!

Heaven must have determined not to cheat the science-loving doctor of his bargain. I find that I was released by friendly Kaffirs and taken to a Kraal. I like these great, honest black men, and shall continue to live with them, if they will have me.

. . . . . .

1870. — Among the white people I was either a cur or a curio! Here I am, among the Amazwazi, a chief and a soothsayer! The King delights to honor me. I cure his aches and pains, and tell his people strange things — to them — as we crouch by the fires in the long, cool evenings. I am now a Kaffir; I have no desire to speak any other language or see any other faces. I have a Kraal

of my own, containing seven huts already, one for each of my wives, and when I return from the caves of the Maccatees I shall have several more.

I sat with the King and his head men today. It was decided to grant the request of the English government, and send 10,000 Zwazi warriors to help the redcoats storm the stronghold of Sekukuni, the Maccatees robber.

. . . . . .

1879. — The expedition has returned — that is, about half of it. Five thousand copper-skinned soldiers, brave and proud, have left their bones to whiten among the rocks where the sneaking Maccatees were brought to bay and destroyed. We set out in three columns, and I was at the head of the finest. After six days we arrived at the mountain. The redcoats were there, waiting. The stronghold we had to storm was a range of hills, full of caves and holes. Half-way up, on a level plateau, was the town. In the morning, before dawn, came the word to advance. In a short time the town was in flames, the cattle were captured, and the robbers had all retreated to the caves.

Now to get them out. The redcoats shelled the caves, and then the Zwazis stormed them. Half of my brave followers were shot down, to begin with, but the other half got in. Then it was Kaffir against Kaffir, and no quarter was asked or given. As fast as the men in the caves were overcome, they were thrown out and down over the steep rocks, and the women and children followed, none being spared but the young girls, who were reserved for the King's orders. The carnage continued until noon, when the redcoats employed dynamite, and applied the torch. In this way they drove out and captured the arch-robber, but the caves still contained hundreds of refugees.

For three days after the fight I patrolled the mountain with some of my men. We could still hear the dogs barking, women and children weeping and men cursing, far down in the caves which the redcoats had closed forever with their dynamite. Stabbing and throwing their enemies over the rocks for the vultures and the wolves is Kaffir warfare — the plan of burying them alive and leaving them is the Christian and more civilized way. You

can take your choice. For my own part, I am glad that I am a Kaffir by adoption, and was neither a white nor a black man by birth.

. . . . . .

On my return from the expedition, I claimed my share of the captives, which the great chief denied me. Thereupon I grew angry, made a raid, and took what belonged to me. Now I am to suffer in consequence. Yesterday I received a not unexpected visit. It was the executioner, with the basket of pipes. He spread the fatal robe on the ground before the entrance to my hut. My wives and children, becoming aware of his arrival, flocked in from all sides, surrounding him and screaming in his face. He took no notice of them, but sat down and awaited my coming.

I left my hut and seated myself before him. Three pipes lay upon the cowskin robe — one white, one black and one red. The white means the spear, the black the poison, and the red — the Roller! I thought a moment, selected the red pipe, lighted it and smoked. The grotesquely tattooed and horribly painted visitor remained silent throughout. When I had finished my smoke, he arose, handed me a reed, and departed. This morning at sunrise he brought me another reed. The day on which he fails to appear at sunrise with the reed will be my last. The ceremonies are simple, solemn and sure. Escape is impossible. To leave the Kraal is to be stabbed in the back.

I know all about the Roller — I have sent men there myself. About a mile from the King's Kraal is a kloof, or ravine, part natural, part artificial — a chute or groove in the side of the mountain. Far ages it has been used for its grim and deadly purpose. It is about half a mile long, ten feet deep and eight feet wide, with sloping sides. At the head of the run is a plateau, where the huge boulders are fashioned into shape and launched on their fearful errands. The inclination is such that they acquire a frightful velocity before they plunge into the river at the foot of the hill.

I have no doubt that when the shields rattle, and the shouts go up when the excutioner steps forward, touches me with the point

of his spear, and I spring from the platform, half the Zwazi nation will be on the heights around. The crowds can tell pretty nearly where you will be killed, by the start that is given you. A bold and fearless runner has a chance, with a good start, and then the excitement on the hills is intense. Then it becomes a race between the man and the Roller, the man rushing for his life toward the river, and the boulder, huge and remorseless, closing the gap between them by leaps and bounds, till the gap is not, and the man is nothing but a memory.

I shall be glad to settle my account with creation in that way. I shall rejoice to hear the pitiless thunder of the rock behind me, and to breathe defiance to the noise of the howling multitude. That is a death for a man to die! They told me I was one of creation's outcasts, one of her mistakes, one of her riddles. Some pointed at me with the finger of scorn, some shuddered, some laughed, — but all thanked God they were not as I! Nevertheless, I shall not die by my own hand to pay my creditor, nor in a mad-house, a hospital, or on the gallows, nor shall I fill a drunkard's or a felon's grave. Verily, those are for my betters!

No! I shall welcome my freedom, with every nerve and muscle in my naked body strained and palpitating to its utmost tension. One moment white-haired, white-skinned, with red eyes, a lion heart and the speed of the wind — and then, in the twinkling of an eye, nothing but a blot on the hillside! Well, let it come.

. . . . . .

And now for the end of the chapter and the book. The sun is already high in the heavens on this, the last day of a useless life, and the reed, the promise of life for a day, has not arrived. The women are weeping and wailing and the little children are in hiding, for fear of the terrible fate that awaits them, for the children of rebels are stoned.

All are in hiding but one, and she, the child of my heart, is clinging to my knees and will neither be comforted nor driven away. Seven bountiful summers have gladdened her heart and brightened her face, and her mother calls her Zula, because she is beautiful, while her father calls her Panzi, because she is good. Her little golden body sparkles and quivers in the sunshine. To

know what her complexion is like, you must watch the amber and gold of the dawn, as it emerges from the sea and is welcomed by a cloudless sky.

And now the mother, in her anguish, is crying, "Do not leave us!" and the little one at my knees is sobbing, "Do not go!"

O child of my heart, not until now has the iron entered my soul and taken from me my strength and my pride!

I sink on my knees in the dust and mingle my sobs with her whispers and her tears. And when I arise, I say to myself, Surely, the wonder and the glory of the universe is neither man nor his handiwork, but the beauty and the holiness in the heart of a child. Panzi, life of my life, would that I could now live, for your sake!

. . . . . .

But at noon the executioner with the horrible countenance will appear, trailing the fatal spear behind him. He will be silent, as before, but he knows that I understand, and must follow.

Now, where is the doctor with a mortgage on my body, and where the white millions who call me a leper and a freak?

The Bird from Cape Horn.*

BY FRANK LILLIE POLLOCK.

HERE is a little taxidermist's shop on Fourth Avenue which is a curious place. It is very dusty and very full of strange fowl, tucked in, one behind the other, on shelves that cover all of one side of the room, and on the other a wizened little old man sits all day long beside a pile of most evil-smelling skins and dispenses words of wisdom to whoever cares to listen.

One day when Marriott ran into the shop for a few minutes before dinner, we found the old man in ecstasies over a new bird-skin that had just been brought in. It was large and dirty and exceedingly ugly and it had a particularly evil smell; but it was rare, and Marriott looked it over respectfully. It had a long neck, long, horny legs and ugainly feet — evidently it was some kind of water-fowl; indeed, the claws were still daubed with mud and black sand, and Marriott, being something of a geologist, peeled off a little of the sand and rubbed it through his fingers, while the little taxidermist got his basin and washed off the rest of it from the bird.

Suddenly Marriott started. He had made a discovery.

"Where did you say this bird came from?" he asked.

The old man stopped washing the bird's legs and began to recount its history. The skin had been brought to him by a sea-captain, he said — Captain Tourjee, of the *Mary Ann Salters* — from South America. Yes, he was sure he was still in town; would Mr. Marriott like his address? Mr. Marriott, it appeared, would like it very much indeed. He took it down carefully, wrapped the lump of dirt in his handkerchief and walked swiftly away down the street, leaving the little taxidermist staring after him with wondering eyes.

Reginald Ernest Marriott, not long since graduated as a mining

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engineer from the College of Applied Science, had his own way to make in the world and nothing to make it with but brains. It is true that he came of an ancient family, whose name had survived its prosperity, and that this connection let him into as much New York society as was good for him; but nobody felt called upon to assist him in any more practical way than by inviting him to dinner, and this, as it happened, was a very serious matter, for there was a woman in the case. It was Edith Whyard, the only daughter of Mr. G. C. Whyard, who lived on Madison Avenue and had an office on Broadway and was reported to be a multi-millionaire. Though no one seemed to know exactly the source of his income, his style of living bore out the assertion, and on the strength of it Mrs. Whyard was making an attack upon the portals of society. Naturally, when it became apparent to her maternal eye that her daughter was allowing her affections to drift in that unprofitable direction, she looked with extreme disapprobation upon young Marriott, and her husband had for him the profound contempt of the practical man for the man of schools and theories. Accordingly, when Marriott asked the old gentleman for his daughter, he was promptly forbidden the house.

Matters were in this state when the young man paid his visit to the taxidermist's shop and saw the bird with the muddy feet. That night he worked hard in the small laboratory he had fitted up in his room, wrote a letter to Edith, packed his possessions and paid his bills, and the next morning at daybreak he sailed out of New York Harbor in a south-bound steamer, with hope in his heart, a wisp of blonde hair in his watch-case and a lump of black mud in his inside coat pocket.

It was a year after this and the grass was green again on Madison Square before news was heard of him. Then, one April morning, he presented himself at Mr. Whyard's office on Broadway. He was bronzed and roughened and he was wearing a new suit and a confident air; the old gentleman hardly knew him and he gave him a more cordial welcome than he would have got if his pretensions had been fresher. Edith had had half a dozen lovers since his day and both the father and mother fancied that the danger from that quarter was over.

Marriott asked after Mrs. Whyard. "And Miss Edith?" he

said eagerly. "You remember, Mr. Whyard, that I love her, that I hope to marry her some day. Last year I was poor, but now I can support her as you would desire. I have property worth eight hundred thousand dollars," he added modestly, "and I have a practical certainty of more than ten times as much."

Whyard wheeled his swivel chair and looked the young man in the face with very evident amazement.

"Ten times eight hundred thousand dollars!" he cried incredulously. "What is this property of yours?"

"Platinum," said Marriott. "You see, sir," he went on quietly, "I ran across a sample of dust from South America last winter; nobody else knew about it, so I went down at once and discovered the place. I only brought up a few thousand dollars' worth, but I have half a ton in dust and nuggets all ready down there, and the rivers are full of it. But what's the matter, sir?"

Whyard had turned pale, and sank back in his chair. He roused himself, however, and questioned the young man quietly enough. "In what part of South America is that?" said he.

"Southern Patagonia, not far from Magellan Straits and near the coast. But will it be all right about Edith, sir?"

Whyard leaned forward in his chair and drummed thoughtfully on the desk. At last he turned back to the young man; there was a pleasant, if somewhat forced, smile on his face.

"Well, I guess I might as well give in, Mr. Marriott," he said. "As you say, things have changed. Call on Edith if you like. As soon as you show your mine is as rich as you say it is, she can do as she likes about marrying you, but not before."

He held out his hand and Marriott grasped it gratefully

"That's fair enough," said he. "But there won't be any trouble about the platinum business, sir. Here's the map of the place. Here's my *cache*," he explained eagerly. "This is where I did most of the washing. The streams are full of it."

Whyard took the map and scrutinized it carefully for a long time. Then he returned it.

"That looks good," said he. "But mind, no engagement till you realize on your stock. Now won't you come up to dinner? Mrs. Whyard will be glad to see you."

Marriott went home to dress. He had secret doubts about the

accuracy of the last statement, but he found his prospective mother-in-law courteous, and Edith was lovelier than ever. The three weeks he was obliged to spend turning his pounds of platinum into ready money and negotiating for a coasting steamer for the return to his treasure, passed like a pleasant dream. He spent part of every day with the Whyards, and although he saw no more of the father, who, he was told, had been suddenly called away from town, he always saw Edith, and he was more than content. When, after the three weeks were over, he sailed away again in the tramp steamer *Montevideo*, which he had chartered and manned especially for the voyage, he was already counting the days before he could return for her. He carried a picked crew of twenty men, and in view of the wild region to which they were bound and the valuable return cargo, shipped a few Winchester rifles and plenty of ammunition.

Thirty-three days were consumed in the voyage to the Rio de la Plata — days of impatience for Marriott — and at Buenos Ayres he was detained for two weeks in negotiations with the Argentine government for mining privileges. Judicious financial arguments, however, pushed this business through, and ten days later he sighted the black headland behind which his treasure lay.

As the inner bay came in sight there was a cry of surprise, for there, anchored close inshore, lay a small, gray-painted steamer. Marriott examined her carefully through a powerful binocular. Her decks seemed deserted, but natives could be seen swarming around the vessel, canvas tents pitched on the beach and men moving about among the rocky hillocks where the platinum was concealed. If not already discovered it was in great danger.

It was doubtful what reception they were to expect, but as Marriott grimly surveyed his twenty able-bodied seamen with their Yankee officers, he felt he could rely upon them to obey his orders, whatever they might be.

Marriott stood on the bridge, anxious but determined. There was evidently a good deal of hurry and bustle on shore, but the stranger's deck remained empty and the *Montevideo's* salute remained unanswered. Apparently she had been left at anchor and her crew disembarked for work on shore. Marriott thought he had best enquire first on board for some one in authority, and he

had a boat lowered and manned. As it approached the strange steamer a face appeared at a forward port-hole.

"Throw us a line!" cried Marriott, and a rope was presently thrown from the deck, by means of which the young man scrambled aboard, leaving the sailors in the boat with ready rifles. There was no one visible but the man who had thrown the line, and to an enquiry for the captain he replied by jerking his thumb toward the after deck-house. Marriott knocked on the closed door, and then pushed it open. Two men were seated at the cabin table. One was evidently the captain; the other was — Mr. G. C. Whyard, of New York!

"What does this mean, young man, boarding a peaceable ship in an armed boat? It's an act of piracy!" roared the captain.

Then Whyard stopped him. "This gentleman's all right, captain. If you don't mind I'd like to talk with him a few minutes." And the shipmaster sulkily retired.

"Well, my boy," he resumed at length, in as parental a manner as he could command, "I didn't look for you quite so soon. Perhaps I ought to have told you at once in New York that I am the American representative of a combination that practically controls the world's supply of platinum. The tons of it you talked of putting on the market would ruin the price, you see."

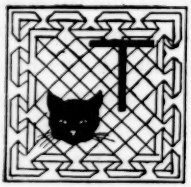
"Thanks for the hint," replied Marriott, drily. "It really hadn't occurred to me. I think you need not fear that your own stock will depreciate — that is, not very much. But I shall have to trouble you to see that your men do not load my property into the wrong vessel."

. . . . . .

When Marriott was married to Edith, some three months later, he was president of the Magellan Platinum Mining Company, and the bride, as her father beamed upon them, wondered that his dislike for the groom had been so quickly overcome, but she will never know anything of the little drama, so intimately concerning her, played in that lonely Patagonian bay.

The Conjured Plantation.*

BY ZITELLA COCKE.



HE century had reached the early forties when Harry Courtenaye came into his estate.

"His dis-estate," pronounced a party of three neighbors who, on a certain autumn afternoon, occupied easy chairs on the verandah of the stately Walsingham mansion, and leisurely discussed what the host called the family hardihood, and the others the family pride, that inspired the heir in his attempts to reclaim his deteriorated plantation.

"Family pride," said the host testily — with an acerbity of emphasis that suggested personal pique — "Family pride is well enough, but a man can't live on it, and if Harry follows in his father's steps he'll not be able to hold Westfield five years. It required exceptional mismanagement to bring such a fine estate to its present worthlessness, but Robert Courtenaye was the worst manager I ever saw. Why, do you know there were months when not more than half a dozen hands were on the field out of a force of ten hundred? The lazy rascals have eaten up a fine fortune, and Courtenaye ought to sell the place and every negro on it, and work his mother's property; but instead he'll make ducks and drakes out of that, trying to keep up Westfield. I offered to buy the plantation. I could afford to let it lie for twenty years, but he looked the picture of injured dignity at the proposal."

"And so he should," said Colonel Welborn, a second member of the trio. "Sell his family negroes! His inheritance? Of course he will not, even if he could find a purchaser. Besides, Westfield can't be utterly ruined, even with the neglect it's undergone, and Harry came of plucky stock. If his father neglected his plantation it was because he was busy serving the country on the

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high seas, and Harry shows the old Commodore's spirit in saddling himself, at two and twenty, with a property he's got to make over again. Give the boy a chance, I say!"

During this conversation, Mr. Bentley, the occupant of the third chair on the verandah, had been silently smoking. Mr. Bentley was one of a numerous class found in the South in the ante-bellum days, a good smoker, a good talker, and, above all, a good listener; which last accomplishment was sometimes worth to such a man fifteen hundred or two thousand dollars a year. A gentleman by birth and breeding, with possibly a moderate income of his own, who comes to make a visit of six weeks and stays six months — six years — twelve years — a life-time! Many a Southern family had such a possession, and gloried in it. Like the family lawyer, he knew all the family secrets and respected them, helped conceal the family skeleton in the closet, and not infrequently officiated as the family adviser. A perfect Barber of Seville in various minute information, he was an authority on the latest news, transatlantic or otherwise, rode to town twice or thrice a week, talked politics, religion and literature, knew where every book ought to stand on the library shelves, quizzed the tutor at the breakfast table, often made special trips to town to match a skein of silk or buy the latest book for the ladies, played whist in the evenings, and amiably took in the most unattractive woman to dinner. None could deny that he earned his keep. This particular example of a general class, Mr. Bentley, was a fifth cousin of Mr. Walsingham, and after the settlement of his father's estate in Maryland, made a visit to his cousin in Virginia, where he remained fifteen years; and not one of the family would have consented to his departure. At the conclusion of Col. Welborn's remarks Mr. Bentley deliberately removed his cigar from his lips, and, smiling significantly, turned to the host, with the words:

"How now, John, about that compact between you and the old Commodore?"

"Compact?" repeated Mr. Walsingham grimly.

"Yes, compact. Isn't Harry Courtenaye to be your son-in-law some day? Wasn't that the agreement?"

Mr. Walsingham elevated his eyebrows and curled his lip.

"Well, Bentley, I congratulate you upon your good taste in the selection of a subject just now; but, since you insist, I will say that my agreement with Commodore Courtenaye was altogether conditional; the marriage was to take place if satisfactory to all parties concerned. Mary is still at school, and it is needless to say that my present opinion of Harry Courtenaye is that he would not prove a desirable son-in-law!"

At that moment the sound of clattering hoofs was heard, and all eyes turned toward the hill in full sight upon the road which stretched away to the nearest post-office.

"That is Harry now, on a galloping horse," said Mr. Marsden, smiling and rising from his seat for a better view.

"Yes, who but a reckless, devil-may-care would gallop a horse up-hill like that!" retorted Mr. Walsingham.

"I never saw the old Commodore ride any other way than at a full gallop," said Mr. Bentley, apologetically.

By this time Harry Courtenaye had reached the foot of the carriage avenue, which wound its way from the road to the Walsingham mansion, and which gave him an unobstructed view of the verandah and its occupants. Lifting his hat in recognition, he held it aloft until he was out of sight, never for a moment relaxing his speed.

"Humph! galloping to destruction!" growled the surly host.

"Let us hope to success," replied Colonel Welborn, waving his hand in the direction of the flying horseman.

After nightfall of the same day, Harry Courtenaye was seated before the long table in the library of Westfield. Near him stood a bust of his father, which the young man contemplated for nearly an hour. Then he suddenly arose, replaced the bust on the shelf, and began restlessly to pace the floor. His countenance expressed determination, but betrayed irresolution; a purpose, yet an ignorance how to achieve that purpose. Presently there was a gentle rap, and before the young man had time to reply the door turned mysteriously on its hinges, and a head and voice came in.

"Does you warnt me, Mars Harry?"

"Oh, yes — yes, I do, Uncle Ephraim," said Harry, pausing abruptly in his march, and turning to the speaker. "Yes; you got my message, did you? Come in, come in."

Uncle Ephraim was the most important functionary on the plantation. He had been the body-servant and confidential slave of Harry's father. At the invitation of the young master, he entered the room and stood hat in hand.

"The truth is, Uncle Ephraim," continued Harry, "I want your advice; I want you to help me — to tell me all about this place — everything on the hill and — "

"Yas, Mars Harry," interrupted the old man, who assumed an expression of intelligence concerning the new master's plans, "de Walsin'ham folks bin tellin me ter day you wuz gwine sell out marster."

"Sell out!" — exclaimed Harry with indignation. "Never, never, Uncle Ephraim! Give up Westfield? No, I'm going to make it a fine place again, like the Westfield of old," answered Harry, laying his hand on the old darkey's shoulder. "I intend to work it out of debt. See if I don't."

The old negro stood for some moments gazing at his young master with a dazed expression, in which utter bewilderment at the stupendousness of the undertaking and admiration for the speaker's resolution strove for mastery. Finally the latter triumphed, and springing forward, he clasped Harry in his arms, sobbing and laughing in that excess of emotion characteristic of his race, as he exclaimed:

"You is — you is sho' nuff! Den, fo' Gawd, Unc' Eph'um gwine hep you. You knows de Co'tenys allus duz whut dey say dey gwine do — dat's de sperrit o' de Co'tenys, en you gwine git dis propity outen debt 'fo' dese half-strainers 'bout hyah knows nuthin' 'bout it. I see you's got de consecushun uv yo' pa, en likewise his revolushun! You's lak yo' pa en' yo' ma bof!"

"Come, Uncle Ephraim, sit down and let's talk about it," said Harry, already won into good spirits by the old negro's enthusiasm, and wiping his eyes, which had moistened a little under his affectionate demonstration. "There's some way out of this thing, and I am going to find it. You know this plantation — every field and every fence corner and everything on it. Now, tell me, is there really no gear on this place fit for use?"

"Nary spidgin — nuthin' wuth yo' botherashun, Mars Harry — you hattah git new gear, out en out."

"Well, now, about the stock — speak out — don't hesitate and don't hide anything. Tell me the worst."

"Waal, Mars Harry, effen I bleest ter tell, dat hoss whut you rid ter-day, en ole Pete's mule 'bout de bes — dey's the onlies ones whut ain' got sump'n mattah wid 'em — de stock on dis plantashun don't wuth er rale good chaw terbakker."

Harry looked at the old man and smiled hopelessly.

"A sorry lookout, Uncle Ephraim, but now about the hands. How many are really able to go into the field besides your two boys? Is every negro on the plantation sick?"

"Waal, Mars Harry," said old Ephraim, with a glance at his master, as quizzical as it was sly, "effen hit come down ter sho' nuff trufe — right down — flat-footed — I bleest ter say dey's all abul ter go ter de fiel', en wuk too — 'douten t'is ole Mammy Kizzy en her ole man."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Harry curtly, "all able to work, when half of them lie in bed all day, and the other half sit in their cabins?"

"Dat's so, Mars Harry, but you see, honey, tain' sho' nuff sick whut ails 'em — hit's conjuh — all dese niggahs is conju'd — dis hyah whole plantashun jes' bodyashusly conju'd, mun. Dat's whut's de mattah. In co'se, conju'd niggahs kin wuk, but den you gottah 'swade 'em, Mars Harry, 'en 'swade 'em hard, mun, fo' dey bleeves you — tain' no wuth tryin' docturs — docturs kyarn do nuthin'. De devul's in er conju'd niggah, en hit take all de strank o' de powfullis sort o' 'swadin ter git him out."

This explanation of the situation was delivered with all the effective gestures and grimaces of the plantation oracle, and Harry listened respectfully, offering no reply, except an occasional smile. One not to the manner born must ever remain ignorant and unappreciative of that respect and affection cherished by the children of a family for the favorite slave of a deceased parent. Such a privileged class was never to be found anywhere else than in the old South, and their most fatiguing garrulousness was, and is now, endured without chiding or remonstrance. Suddenly Harry exclaimed:

"Well, well, Uncle Ephraim, how am I going to persuade them? I don't want to whip them, and I won't — the fools

think they are sick, don't they? Oh, it's a horrid, miserable business — if they were not family negroes I'd sell them — but nobody would have them as a gracious gift. They've got a name for worthlessness, I'm told, through the whole State of Virginia. And, anyway, that's out of the question."

For a moment Uncle Ephraim stood gazing silently at the slim, well set-up figure as it paced up and down the room. Then he laid a hand on his master's arm. "Law, Mars Harry," he said, "set down — tain' no wuth ter be w'arin' yo'self out dat a way. Tain' whuppin', en tain' sellin' — but I kin tell you whut, Mars Harry," and Uncle Ephraim looked the impersonation of wisdom.

"What then?" said Harry, pausing and looking at the old man.

"Hit's skeerin', suh! skeerin', dat's hit," replied old Ephraim, blinking his eyes and speaking in a sort of stage whisper. "Mars Harry, ain' you seen chillun wid de hiccups? You kin kyore 'em mighty quick wid er big skeer. Now, dar wuz yo' pa — he cud do some pow'ful cussin', but dis hyah conjuh go furder'n cussin' gwine kyore — hit gottah be er big, sho' nuff skeer, Mars Harry. I doan' furgit offen my mind de time yo' pa gin dat biggis' cussin', but twuz when he git back fum' his longis' sailin'. Waal, attah dat, dem niggahs went ter de fiel' every mawnin' nigh onter seb'n weeks — en some dose niggahs ain' struk er lick o' wuk sence!"

The conference between master and man lasted until a late hour of the night, and as old Ephraim, his countenance radiant with smiles, was bowing himself out of the door, Harry said:

"Now mind, Uncle Ephraim, look out for old Kizzy and Tom, and tell your boys, Mark and Pompey, to be on hand for my orders by seven o'clock in the morning; say nothing else to them, remember."

"Mars Harry, when did ole Eph'um furgit ordahs?" said the old man, reproachfully. He chuckled, however, as he descended the steps of the great house. The path to his cabin wound around an undulation, bordered with hedges of box, and as he followed it he kept up a soliloquy, alternating with satisfactory grunts and scarcely audible laughs: "I lay dars gwine be fun on his hyah plantashun fo' long, sho'!"

Early next morning, Mark and Pompey presented themselves for orders at the young master's door.

"Mark, do you and Pompey gather together all the worn-out, broken ploughs and pieces of gear and harness — every bridle and rope not in use — and pile them in the open field, just beyond the cabins. Find every piece on the plantation and have them there by one o'clock to-day. I will be on the ground to give further orders."

"Yes, suh," replied the sons of Ephraim, with the customary hat-lifting and foot-scraping of plantation etiquette.

By noon, the task of collecting the worthless wreck of material which had served its use as a part of the plantation equipment was completed, and the pile of rubbish stood several feet high in the open field.

A galloping horse soon bore the master to the spot.

"Mark! Pompey!" called he, "each of you fetch a torch and set fire to this pile."

The two men walked across the field to the nearest cabin and returned with blazing torches. In a moment the pile was a mass of flame.

Such unusual activity on a plantation which had remained undisturbed by any demonstration of energy for so many years did not fail to excite surprise, and even interest, on the part of its disabled tenants. Some of them sauntered out leisurely to the field, scraping a bow or dropping a courtesy to the master as they chanced to pass him. Others, unequal to such effort, stood in the cabin-doors, directing inquiring glances toward the field of operations. The master, apparently unobservant of any presence, except the two men who were executing his orders, sat quietly on his horse while the pile was being consumed. Then, in stentorian tones, distinctly heard through every room and cranny of the negro quarters, he called out to Mark and Pompey:

"Boys, by noon to-morrow have all the crippled stock on the plantation in this field. See that you find every blind horse, every lame mule, every sick hog and sheep. Scour the whole plantation. Don't leave a sick chicken on the place!"

The next day at noon, Westfield presented an extraordinary scene. One part of the open field, fenced off for the purpose, was

occupied by such a grotesque collection of disabled and diseased stock — blind horses, staggering mules, lame pigs and afflicted cattle — that a naturalist might have taken it for an exhibition of monstrosities. By the time Mark and Pompey had fairly secured the unfortunates within the prescribed limits, the young master was seen rapidly riding to the spot, followed by old Ephraim ostentatiously bearing two rifles. At this startling sight excitement ran high at the negro quarters. The inmates of the cabins no longer stood in the doorways, straining eyes and craning necks to see what was taking place. The bed-ridden forgot, for a time at least, their ailments, and hastened in the wake of Uncle Ephraim. Even crutches were laid aside, and groups of dozens and crowds of twenties and thirties swarmed the narrow path to the field, and before the master had dismounted the fence enclosing the dilapidated quadrupeds was supported by a palisade of ebony figures, upon whose faces every other expression was replaced by one of dense bewilderment and devouring curiosity. Meanwhile, Uncle Ephraim stood near the master, surveying the scene with an air of Olympian majesty. Not a muscle of his face moved as he gazed, sometimes at the helpless, staggering brutes and sometimes at the eager, expectant countenances around the fence. Never in the history of the plantation had its acknowledged oracle appeared so omnipotent as, with bated breath, the question flew from mouth to mouth, "What Unc' Eph'um gwine do?"

Suddenly all whispering ceased. There was absolute silence. The master had leaped from his horse and he and Uncle Ephraim were slowly marching to one corner of the enclosure. When that spot was reached, Ephraim handed a gun to the master, who deliberately took aim at the nearest mule and fired. The animal, shot through the head, fell and expired without the quiver of a muscle. Ephraim now handed the second gun and reloaded the first. Another unerring shot brought a crippled cow to the ground. An excellent marksman handled the guns and every aim sent a bullet straight through the head of a disabled beast. During the firing the children ran back into the cabins, some of the women began to cry and a few of the men ventured jokes, but for the greater number the scene was one of awful solemnity. When the last carcase lay upon the ground, the master delivered the

guns to Uncle Ephraim and mounted his horse, where he sat a few moments quietly looking on the crowd. The negroes had not yet begun to disperse, and were still too much awed by the grewsomeness of the scene to indulge in idle chat. They retained their positions around the fence, gazing upon the forlorn spectacle as if held by an irresistible fascination. The sound of the master's voice awakened them. "Mark! Pompey!" cried he, "by to-morrow noon see that every hand on the plantation who is not in the field by eight o'clock is inside this enclosure. Search every cabin and bring every one here who is not in the field at work."

Almost before the reply of "Yes, suh," came back, the young master was riding in a sweeping gallop toward the house. On the next morning at seven o'clock old Ephraim was knocking at his master's chamber door.

"Mars Harry, Mars Harry, is you up?"

"Yes; what do you want? Come in!"

"Mars Harry," said Ephraim, entering the chamber and grinning with an air of triumph, "dar ain' nary case o' hiccups on dis hyah plantashun, suh; every niggah on dis hill is in de fiel', cep'n ole Kizzy en ole Tom. Yo' hard 'swadin is done kyored some mighty bad cases o' hiccups. Yes, suh, fo' Gawd, Wesfiel' gwine have er crap dis year, sho's you bawn! Lissen, Mars Harry — you can heah de han's a singin'."

Harry walked to the window, and, true enough, the song of the field hands at work came ringing through the clear morning air.

"That's a fact, Uncle Ephraim — you don't say they are all at work?"

"Yes, suh, sho' fac'; nary one in de cab'ns, cep'n dem two, en dey is sho' nuff sick — de doctur done tole me. Yes, suh, cunjuh done leff dese diggin's. Cunjuh kyarn stan' hard 'swadin, you see — hit done gone, hair en hide!"

"Well, Uncle Ephraim. Do you take a nice breakfast from my table to old Uncle Tom and Aunt Kizzy, with my best compliments, and when the hands come in to dinner tell them they shall have a barbecue Saturday afternoon, and a big jollification that night if I have to buy mutton and pigs for it. Westfield shall be Westfield again!"

"Dat 'twill, Mars Harry," said old Ephraim, rubbing his hands

with delight, "en dem outdashus Walsin'ham niggahs ain' gwine wuk it nuther. Dat make me so happy, I hattah laff, 'douten I cry."

Saturday brought the promised barbecue and festivity, and two months of steady work began to tell upon the decrepit premises of Westfield. The neighbors again discussed the estate and its proprietor over cigars and wines, and even Mr. Walsingham admitted the possibility of Westfield's ultimate redemption. He even condescended to ride by it occasionally, and note with his own eye the growing improvements. A new barn in process of erection did not escape his observation. One day, slowly walking his horse near the wide gate which opened into the park in front of the Courtenaye mansion, he descried old Ephraim busily superintending the labors of Mark and Pompey, who were removing the accumulated débris of many a season from the struggling hedgerows.

"Ah, is that you, Ephraim?" inquired he. "Your young master's well?"

"Yes, suh, Mars Harry well, en he doin' mighty well too," replied the old slave.

"Yes, I see he's building a new barn."

"Yes, suh, en dat ain' nuthin ter what he gwine buil' fo' long. You see, suh, Mars Harry is dat prosp'us en dat over-run wid big crops he doan' know what ter do wid it all, en he got so many wukkin' en willin' niggahs whut druther wuk den not, dat Westfiel' kyarn hole him long. He hattah buy mo' lan', en hit come ter my mine, suh, effen you warn' sell yourn, Mars Harry buy you out in er minit!"

To this Mr. Walsingham disdained to reply, but rode away abruptly. As soon as he was out of sight, old Ephraim fairly doubled himself with shrieking laughter, in which Mark and Pompey joined so long that work was suspended for an hour at least.

"I lay dar ain' no mo' tauk 'bout buyin' out Mars Harry, daddy?" said Mark reverentially.

"I jes' 'lowed ter eend all dat big tauk," replied his father, in a tone of authority.

The Easter holidays were near at hand, when one morning Mr. Walsingham's butler stood at the door of Westfield with a note for

its proprietor. Uncle Ephraim, the factotum of the establishment, until its master should be able to restore its former dignity and retinue, received the note,— it was an invitation to Mr. Courtenaye to spend the Easter holidays with a house party at the Walsingham mansion,— delivered it majestically to his young master, and then stood eyeing him while the reply was being written. Finally he ventured a remark:

"Mars Harry, dat man o' Mr. Walsin'ham, dar at de do', 'low his young mistus done come home fum school en dars er mighty 'mirashun gwine on dar bouten it."

"Yes," replied the young master, abstractedly laying in Uncle Ephraim's outstretched palm the note which, with a solemn shake of the head, that functionary carried out without comment to Mr. Walsingham's butler.

Not a word did he exchange with his young master during that day, but at night, as he sat in his cabin, he said confidentially to Mark and Pompey, "Boys, hit look lak dat Mr. Walsin'ham making nuther noshun ter git er holt on Wesfiel'. An ef I can, I gwine put er spoke in dem Walsin'ham's wheel, you bettah bleeve, kase I fatally spises dem Walsin'hams en dem Walsin'ham niggahs, en I ain' never gwine gin my cornsent fur dem ter wuk dis lan'. I bin running de Co'teny place dese forty year, en Mars Harry shan' mah'y in that Walsin'ham fambly. Dey ain' no aristocks, no way."

"We all, too," answered Mark and Pompey, with filial reverence.

But perhaps Uncle Ephraim relented with the flight of years, for he stood near the font in smiling approbation when his young master's son was christened John Walsingham Courtenaye.

For the Honor of the Cloth.*

BY EVELYN RAYMOND.

THE opening evening service of the quarterly convocation at St. Simon's was concluded and most of the congregation had dispersed. But there still remained in the church those few substantial members upon whom the rector chiefly depended. Besides these faithful men and women, designated by the pastor's irreverent son as "shiners," there were also present the visiting clergy and lay delegates from three counties.

The hospitable disposal of these guests, for their three days' sojourn in the parish, was now to be arranged by Doctor Everleigh. He began, beaming genially upon his senior warden:

"Ah! Mr. Treadwell. Doubtless you'll bespeak the entertainment of our good Dean? and you know that Mrs. Marston accompanies her husband? Of course, of course. Well, good night, good night, brother. Mr. Treadwell's carriage is at the door. A pleasant rest to you, and be on hand in the morning. Ten-thirty, sharp. We're promptness itself at St. Simon's. Good night, good night."

The senior warden waddled down the aisle, with the gentle Archdeacon in tow; and having thus settled his Doctor of Divinity, the rector looked about for his next important parishioner and his second best cleric, and thus continued to couple them in due order. Unfortunately, his glance fell upon a tall, veiled figure standing quietly near the outer door, and at once his countenance altered, his smile lost its geniality, and his manner became nervously confused.

Yet the unobtrusive woman, who so meekly waited to gather up any crumb of a guest which might be left over from the general allotment, was one of his truest constituents. A "widow

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indeed," whose life was given up to good works; whose words were few and fitly spoken; whose attendance at all church services was unfailing; whose purse was deeper than the senior warden's and far more open — in short, a living exemplification of the Golden Rule. In Madame Harriman's piety even Meade Everleigh's gibing tongue could find no flaw though, undoubtedly, she was the most brilliant of all the "shining lights."

Strange, then, that the good Doctor should turn his eyes away and groan in anguish of spirit:

"I must ignore her. If I can possibly help it, I will never, never send another brother to stop at her house."

Lingering in this goodly company from sheer idleness, Meade saw the perturbation of his sire and divined its cause. Whereupon his nostrils dilated and a brisk cheerfulness transformed his bearing.

With a grace worthy of a better cause he immediately proceeded to lighten his father's labors. His gaze rested upon a pale and tremulous young man, not yet out of deacon's orders, and his decision was quickly made.

"That blond creature looks ready to faint, even now. He's the very checker!"

So it chanced that before the rector quite realized what was happening his son had paired them off, guest and host, with an incongruity that only he could have achieved. The ill sorted pair, believing that the lad acted under orders, accepted their portion, and the absent-minded Doctor, discovering that none now remained in the church save Madame Harriman, the blond deacon, his ne'er-do-well offspring, and himself, saw there was no alternative — Madame had secured her crumb and must be allowed to enjoy it. So, making a virtue of necessity, yet feeling himself an abject hypocrite, the clergyman laid his hand upon his young co-laborer's sleeve and said to Madame Harriman:

"Allow me — the Reverend Paul Doddridge. May I ask if it will be convenient for you to entertain him while he stays among us?"

"Mr. Doddridge, I am very happy; and of course you know, Doctor, I am sincerely delighted with the opportunity. We are the last, I see, and my horses —"

Still unduly helpful, Meade extinguished the last glimmer and the quartette blundered out into a blackness which could be felt.

"Why, my son! You should have waited — "

"But, father, it's so late; and I thought we'd everybody fixed, now."

"Yes, I suppose we have," he said, sighing.

"How extremely dark!" murmured the lady, as they entered the porch and the door slammed behind them.

Paul struggled desperately with his shyness. Then, extending his arm, "Allow me, Madame," he said — and found himself face downward on the path.

The poor fellow had entered from the front and was quite unfamiliar with this side of the building.

"That's only where the money gave out," remarked Meade, consolingly.

"Oh! I forgot to warn you. The steps *are* wanting, but it's not so high — just down from the threshold — we who are accustomed — Dear, dear! What a pity!" fussed the Doctor.

"Are you hurt?" asked a gentle voice, as the lady whom Paul had meant to assist quietly assisted him to his feet.

"No. No, thank you, I — "

The Doctor interposed and himself led Madame Harriman toward the little aureole in the fog made by her carriage lamps.

Meade, likewise, thrust his arm under the deacon's and gaily marched him onward.

"Hope it's no sign you're going where you're not welcome. Never mind, you've covered yourself with sand, if not with glory."

"Sir! I can walk very well without — "

"Oh! not the slightest trouble. You see, I'm used to the place, if you aren't, and I've always felt sorry for shy people, though Pater says they're not necessarily cowards. Hope you're as brave as you look, because — Well, nobody stays there more'n one night. Though, let us not anticipate. Sufficient unto the day is the evil; only this evil generally happens in the night. I'd like the chance myself."

Paul jerked his arm from his tormentor. He had never been more angry. How had that audacious youth guessed his personal weaknesses? Then he inquired, in a dignified tone:

"Does my hostess reside far from the church?"

"Not much more'n a mile. The house stands in a big grove, and half the rooms are kept shut up. That's where — No matter. Isn't another one in sight. Madame lives all alone, with her servants and — Well, of course, there's a good deal of talk. Needn't any of it be true. Lying's easier than truth-telling to 'most everybody but me. I'm always in hot water simply because I can't dissemble. I hate a dissembler, don't you?"

"Certainly."

"Then, say! Will you tell me, to-morrow, straight goods, just what happens out there at Hawkshurst, to-night — if you get through it?"

Already self-reproachful concerning his late wrath, the deacon answered, gently:

"I know no reason why I should not."

"There was Streeter, of Clarendon — St. John's. You know him, I suppose. Another young dominie about your pattern. Well, he thought it was all a joke, and he promised; but when he found it wasn't a joke, he flunked. I call a parson's breaking his word worse than the lying of an ordinary sinner, don't you?"

"Yes, yes, of course," rashly admitted the other, and climbed with awkward haste into the curtained victoria where his hostess now awaited him.

As the vehicle rolled away, Paul's first sensation was of relief from the too loquacious youth; his next consternation. By all the tenets of his profession and all the books of etiquette he had conned, he should now make himself agreeable; yet not a word could he say.

For a time, even Madame Harriman was silent; then she opened conversation on the weather.

Her companion listened in a tremor, but presently found himself wondering at the sweet cadence of her voice, touched with an infinite sorrow.

The sorrow appealed to him; the darkness gave him confidence, and he was able to reply. From the weather to the church they both adored was but a step, and when they reached Hawkshurst the young man reflected that, after all, the drive had been a short one and he had been talking more than common.

The guest followed his hostess into a cosy parlor, where lamps and grate were glowing and a daintily spread supper awaited them.

"Make yourself comfortable in that arm-chair by the fire, Mr. Doddridge, while I brew a cup of tea," said the lady, removing her heavily draped head-gear and handing it to a maid.

Her action suggested emergence from a cloud and, now that she was within the shelter of her own home, her spirits suddenly rose to an almost girlish vivacity.

"Indeed, she looks young, despite her snow-white hair and deeply lined face. Aged by great trouble, I hazard, rather than years; and — she's a beauty still."

Which unuttered thought of the observant parson proves that a man may be an avowed celibate, yet know a pretty woman when he sees her.

She went on, merrily:

"I declare, I'm very hungry! and you must be, too, Mr. Doddridge. Begging pardon, I never knew a minister who wasn't, and I've entertained many. Yes, I've always had a predilection for the cloth," she concluded, earnestly, yet without the slightest coquetry of manner.

"That is flattering to its wearers," returned Paul, surprised by his own readiness.

Then he glanced about him and relapsed into awkwardness. His surroundings were unlike anything within his poverty-pinched experience. His hostess, making tea, was a revelation.

Her exquisitely graceful figure was gowned in some texture whose gauziness relieved its sombreness, and gave to her snow-crowned, colorless face a most appropriate setting. Her dark eyes seemed to hold a weight of unshed tears, even while her lips were laughing, and the deft turns of her delicate wrists, as she swung her tea-ball and poured the steaming water, made a memorable picture.

With infinite tact she roused the maladroit youth to his best, till he stood higher in his own regard than he had ever done before. Indeed, the skill with which she led him on to talk of his most hidden thoughts was consummate.

"But, my dear Madame, all this is egoism and can scarcely interest you, though your kindness —"

"Beg pardon, but it does interest me, profoundly. More than any other subject, touching earth or heaven. You have no conception what it is to me to have you here, to learn of this inner life of yours. The inner life — the real life! And you so young, so yet unstained by sin. Surely, it must avail. It must."

Paul was amazed. The woman's tone had the sincerity of deepest feeling. As if the simple tale of his humble consecration had touched upon some secret chord of her own soul and thrilled it to agony. The unshed tears were almost breaking bounds and the smiling lips had grown tense and white.

"Truly, you overrate me, my position, my worthiness, my self-conquest. Believe me, I am but the weakest of the weak; and so self-conscious, so 'shy.' So different from my only brother, who was boldness itself while he remained at home. He left us. But I have never before said so much about my doubts and diffidence to anybody, not even my mother, as I have said to you."

"Oh! I am so thankful."

"You have been very gracious to me, therefore you must not be deceived, though it isn't pleasant to tell: I have but mediocre intellect; I am superstitious, which means ignorant; I am the most nervous, and irritable of men, and the biggest coward. If I were sent into battle I should turn at the smell of powder, and — Why lengthen the list? But look not up to me, you, whose godliness is spoken of even in that remote corner whence I come."

Paul had risen and covered his face with his hands, terrified by his own outburst and by the power of this woman to provoke it.

What was this she was saying? What?

"You brave, beautiful soul! You are the first, the very first I ever knew who dared to be absolutely true. Oh! how glad you have made me, how glad! He, too, is true. The Living Truth, the Living Mercy. None other has availed, or could; because in each there was a hidden lie. But a liar shall not stand before God. How much less, then, dare to present my petition. Oh! I thank Him, I thank Him, that He has sent you under my roof this night!"

The woman was beside herself. In an ecstasy she caught Paul's hands and kissed them, again and again, with reverent adoration.

Still — with no trace of earthly passion. All of their talk had been, as it were, personally impersonal, and the only thrill which stirred the young priest's frame, as her beautiful lips caressed his trembling fingers, was of infinite compassion.

For, clearly and pitifully, even though religiously, she was mad!

She did not give him time for further speech, but, with the step of a girl, sprang to a bell and summoned a servant.

"Mr. Doddridge will retire now, Martin. Please attend him to the library chamber."

Martin was elderly and privileged. He protested, as if in duty bound and not anticipating success:

"The blue room is warmed and lighted, Madame. I thought, maybe —"

"The library chamber, Martin," repeated the mistress, with dignified decision.

Mr. Doddridge murmured his good night and followed his guide into a large and sombre room in the disused part of the mansion. A lamp burned on a table and a fire upon the hearth, but these seemed rather to accent than relieve the gloom, so wholly in contrast to the brightness left behind.

"Is there nothing your reverence would like before I go, sir? A glass of wine, perhaps, or anything such?"

"Nothing. Nothing, thank you," half stammered Paul, oppressed as much by the frank compassion in the butler's eyes as by his magnificence of bearing.

It was a relief when, after some useless fussing about, Martin went away; though even when the door had closed behind him he tapped and opened it again, to observe:

"If you should happen to need me, sir, your reverence will please pull the furthermost bell on the northwest wall. The lamp is fixed to burn all night."

"Very good."

The excited and wakeful guest was tempted by the ancient rocker drawn up beside the fire, but reflected:

"No. That won't do. It's been a strange experience, and, for a moment, I've forgotten reality. I must to bed and rest. The good Doctor asked me to read the lessons at to-morrow morn-

ing's service and I must be in trim to do it. It's an honor; with so many others present better fitted to the task. But what comes in the line of duty I must not shirk even if I shrink."

By the time he rose from his knees, Paul had forgotten his surroundings, and, laying his head upon a pillow of unaccustomed softness and richness, dropped into a dreamless sleep.

From which he awakened slowly, completely, quite unsurprised.

He might many times have seen the figure sitting upright in the chair beside the great bed, it appeared so familiar.

"Well? What is it? Am I wanted?"

"Yes. You are wanted."

Paul immediately arose. The habit of his life had been obedience, but, as he stepped from the warm couch even the deep pile of the carpet felt icy in contrast. Involuntarily, he shivered.

"Are you afraid?"

Till then he had not been, in the slightest degree. Now, there arose within him a fear, as sudden and horrible as it was inexplicable, and he reeled before it.

"You are — afraid!"

For the first time he noticed the voice — a thin, nerve-rasping, exaggerated falsetto. Odd to proceed from the intruder, whose mighty physique contrasted almost violently with the wraith-like young divine in his white pajamas.

Yet the giant had not the look of a sound man, and — Good God! As surely as he himself was mortal, that other was a corpse!

Paul shook in his ague of terror, while all the weird and ghastly tales he had ever heard flashed through his brain. His only conscious thought was a yearning to die and escape.

He could neither die nor close his eyes. He could only gaze — gaze — till his lungs congested, his limbs grew marble, and he fell headlong on the floor. When he regained consciousness his ghastly visitor still occupied the bedside chair.

"Are you still afraid?" it demanded.

In the fascination of horror the deacon now noticed every detail of the questioner's appearance. His unnatural growth of sandy hair and beard, which accented the cadaverous cheeks and

brow; his sunken eyes, luminous with unearthly light, and the clothing which hung limply upon his rigid form. The shirt had fallen apart at the neck, showing a dark stain, as if a cord had once been tightly knotted there.

Paul knew what that meant. A rope had made that ineradicable line. This was a suicide before him, a murderer of self.

"You don't deny it. You are afraid. They are all afraid. There have been many. All afraid. They would rather leave a soul to be damned than conquer fear. All afraid. Living lies. Worse, worse than dead ones. Cowardly parsons, glibly praying for the innocent who live and need them not; but for the soul in hell — in hell! Pray! PRAY!"

Paul had once thought that only in utter unconsciousness would he be beyond prayer. Yet now his stiffened lips would not move, nor his eyes lose their fixity of gaze; until his trembling helped him, swaying his slight body, aspen-like, toward the foot of the bed and — his coat.

In that was magic. With shaking hands he drew it on and buttoned it close, and the sombre cloth had become the armor of the Lord. It was no longer Paul, the poltroon, who stood there; it was Paul, the lion of God.

"Kneel!" he thundered.

The spectre knelt. Stiffly, as a dead man might. This the other did not see, for his own eyes were closed, his face upraised, his thin hands clasped, and his voice like one inspired.

He was inspired. As if the souls of all the saints in whose wake he followed had entered into his soul, to clamor for expression. Odd, that the dominant cry of each was as the slogan of a clan:

"For the honor of the cloth!"

Aye. "For the honor of the cloth" Paul had conquered worse than death — his fear.

That marvellous appeal for mercy rang clarion clear into the darkened library beyond, and to Madame Harriman prostrate there, in agony of supplication. Even Martin, lingering in the hallway, felt his old marrow melted by its fervor, till his unaccustomed knees bent of themselves into an attitude where grace might reach him if it would.

Suddenly the unnoticed moans and wailings of the cadaver ceased and the silence accomplished what the lamentations had not. The petitioner paused and opened his eyes.

The corpse had fallen forward upon the bed, with extended arms and fingers convulsively clutching the coverlet.

Paul gasped. Had he been the instrument of a miracle, and restored the dead to life? Or had he —

"For the honor of the cloth!"

The wide bed was between them but the young priest leaped it like an athlete. It was David and Goliath over again.

When the frightened listeners from beyond the doors tore this David from his Goliath, they found him wilder with rage than he had been with zeal. Not till the daylight came, and Madame's soft voice had grown hoarse with the repeated story, was he appeased. Even then, it was with one hand clinching the cerements of his cadaver, lest by some mischance it might yet escape him.

But it dared not, even if it would. There was a new and martial bearing about Paul Doddridge, deacon, that brooked no insurrection. He had fought the good fight and to the victor belonged the spoils.

. . . . . .

As the Harriman carriage rolled away from Hawkshurst that morning it was followed by a shabby, tramp-like youth, who peered curiously at its occupants, particularly the young deacon.

When it drew up at St. Simon's, Meade Everleigh was on hand at the lych-gate, determined that the timid clergyman should not elude his vigilance, if vigilance could extort any confession of weird experience.

With his most courtly bow the lad sprang forward, brushing aside an intrusive tramp, to open the carriage door — and then fell backward.

Paul, the coward? Paul, the conquering hero, who saw nothing of earth! On his arm, the resurrected master of Hawkshurst, stumbling in blind humility through that gate of the dead back to life. Following him, the devoted wife, no longer in widow's weeds, but clothed with lightness, and upturning a radiant face which all the world might see.

All saw and held their breath, shudderingly, as this wedded pair, which even death had not divorced, knelt at the chancel steps, while the young priest, speaking as from the grave, confessed them before men.

"In my wrath, I, Andrew Harriman, struck a death-blow upon a youth whom I had trusted and who had defrauded me. I saw him fall, in the place where we two had met alone; and, cowardly, I fled from the consequences of my sin, to enmesh my soul by lies, which was a greater crime.

"During two awful years I have lived concealed at Hawkshurst. The story of my sudden decease abroad was a lie. The empty coffin you buried was a lie. The widow's garb, which I compelled my wife to wear, another lie. The 'ghost' that has haunted my desolated home was a lie, the worst of all, a living one — myself.

"I have tried to die, and could not. At almost my last gasp, the rope with which I hung myself was cut from my throat by my wife's own hands.

"In the room where I sought this release I sought also for God's mercy. There, by my wish and her devotion, has been lodged every holy man whom she could persuade to sleep beneath our roof. To each and all of them I have appeared, imploring them to pray for me and my forgiveness. Before each and all my haggard face has helped me to pose as an unhappy spirit, wearing the semblance of life. Each and all have failed me, till he came whom the Lord sent.

"Now, in obedience to the ceaselessly reiterated entreaties of my faithful wife, and the command of this man who has been true to his vows, I yield myself into the hands of justice, to expiate my crime as it decrees — and so — May God have mercy on my soul!"

It was a concourse of conservative churchmen and, for the briefest time, silence enthralled them. Then a murmur rose, died, and rose again, to swell into a tumult of rejoicing.

When this, in its turn, ebbed, there stood one beside Paul on the chancel floor, remorsefully regarding the kneeling pair below them.

A very counterpart of the young deacon was this stranger, save

that the one was evil and the other good. Yet the tramp's hand rested, as if with an affectionate right, upon the surpliced shoulder, and gathered strength therefrom.

"Hear me, also. I, Matthew Doddridge, am the prodigal, mourned for as dead, but returned after many days to face — the man who killed me."

Eph Follett's Monument.*

BY JOSEPHINE SPENCER.

IT was late in the afternoon of Decoration Day. Memorial services had been over several hours, and the white-dotted square on the hillside was almost empty, but three women still lingered in the northeast corner, around the monument to Eastville's only hero. The tall white slab had been put up only that day, and they were reading the inscription for the twentieth time: —

To the Memory of

EPHRAIM FOLLETT,

Who fought and fell in the Civil War,

Anno Domini 1865.

Erected by his Daughter, Thankful Follett,

In Loving Remembrance of her Father.

Below these lines of prose were several verses referring to the departure of the soldier from this earthly life.

"I like the po'try best," said one of the women. "Thankful, you read it out loud."

She looked towards a younger woman, who was standing at the head of the grave. She was thin and sallow, and her hair, pulled back tightly underneath her plain black hat, was pale and lustreless, as if the owner had never had time to care for it properly. Her print skirts, which were brushing the hyacinths on the grave, were scant and faded. There were about her all those pathetic signs of premature old-maidhood, but just at that moment her face was so full of joy and a sober kind of triumph that it looked almost pretty. She seemed to be in a sort of trance, and the

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elder woman had to reach over and shake her arm before she made her hear.

"You read the poetry out loud, Thankful," she repeated.

The girl began obediently. She read the commonplace words in a chanting tone, with so much fire and spirit that they thrilled her hearers. Her mother lifted her head proudly and the other woman sighed with pleasure.

"I do call that beautiful!" said she. "Who'd ever 'a thought Thankful could 'a done anythin' as fine es thet? I should certain think it'd make you feel proud, Mis' Follett, to think that your own husband hes got the only soldier's moniment in Eastville."

Mrs. Follett shook her head. "I ain't denyin' I git some comfort out on him since he's ben dead, but he wasn't much account while he was livin'," she said. "I don't know what to make of Thankful. She's fair daft on her father, an' she allers hes bin. She wasn't more'n knee high to a grasshopper when she 'lowed she'd hev him a moniment, an' she ain't never thought o' nothin' else. Lordy! now that moniment is paid fur, I reckon she won't know what to do with herself!"

Her friend paid little attention to her. She had heard all this before. "Mandy," she broke in in a shrill whisper, "ain't you never thought — what ef Eph didn't die out thar, efter all?"

Mrs. Follett turned with a startled look. It still haunted her like a nightmare, the thought that some day her shiftless, lazy husband might come back and claim the right to sit beside her kitchen fire for the rest of his life. She had none of her daughter's illusions, and she was always afraid of hearing that he had come back. But a glance at her friend's passive face reassured her.

"You shut up, M'ria Dyer!" she said sharply. She pointed to her daughter, who had knelt down on the grave and buried her face in the flowers piled about the headstone. "Ef she sh'd hear you — well, I do b'lieve 'twould 'bout kill her ef all she's ben doin' was fur naught. An' thar ain't no sense in it. He's jest es dead es I shall be when I'm put under this here gravestone, an' I ain't goin' to be buried in no trance neither."

Mrs. Dyer recognized the snap in her friend's tone and she

spoke conciliatingly. "Well, perhaps thet's so," said she. "Leastwise thar ain't no call tu talk on it thet I know on. You come off with me, Mandy, an' hev a cup o' tea. Thankful's so afeared somebody'll steal them blooms thet she'll stay here till the Lord knows when. Look et her! She's jest like a child with a new doll."

The girl looked up and smiled. She was arranging the flowers over again now, fondling them with her touch. Half of her week's wages had gone into them, but evidently she did not grudge it.

The two women walked away together, gossiping. After they had gone, Thankful rose and sat down on the curbing that bordered the lot, letting her eyes wander across the tops of the village houses and the meadows, full of blossoming apple trees, to the hills beyond. The sun, sinking deeper in the west, pushed the shadow of the slab slowly towards her across the mound. Now and then she glanced back at the bright flowers strewn over the grave, toned down a little now by the creeping shadows. There was an ineffable sadness about the lonely cemetery, in the late afternoon light, but the melancholy had something indescribably sweet in it. Without knowing it, this country girl, who was laying her life on the altar of her unknown father's memory, was tasting the delicious, half-sensuous rapture of the mystic. The fragrance of the wilting flowers grew heavier. Gradually it overpowered her; her head sank down among them, resting on the soft green mound, and the hyacinths sent up an incense-like fragrance from their crushed bells.

The graveyard, lying outside the village, was very still. Of actual sounds, one only rose at intervals — the rich contralto of a robin, reiterating its two minor notes somewhere near at hand, with dramatic cadence. Sunken nearly to the horizon, the sun was steeping the hillside in yellow light, the shadow of slabs and shafts lying lengthwise across it in irregular bluish bars, and the tall monument stretched a long arm of shade out over the sleeping girl.

At last the silence was broken by footsteps. A man came around the slab from the roadway and, not seeing the girl, stopped to read the inscription. After he had read the first words, a look

of amazement, almost of terror, came over his face. He devoured each line with breathless interest; then he spelled the words over again in a husky whisper.

Two initials, "E. F.", were cut at the top of the slab, circled by a tiny wreath of laurel.

The man gazed at them meditatively.

"It's jest about a dead sure thing," he said aloud, in a tone of settled conviction — as if the two letters were the final link in a chain of proof forming gradually in his consciousness. "The plumb same name 'n' initials, 'n' all the rest, 'cept — "

He paused with a look of wonder on his face. He had caught sight of the girl, and he stood gazing at her with open mouth.

"Well, I declare!" he said aloud.

Either his voice or his fixed stare roused her, for she sat up and opened her eyes. She saw a ruffianly-looking man with patched, ragged clothes and a dirty hat drawn over an unshaven face. She was not afraid of tramps, and she did not scream. She only sat still, looking at him sternly, thinking that he would go away. But he did not move. A puzzled look came over his face, and he rubbed his hand across his forehead as if to rub away a vision.

"Lord!" he said softly.

"Did you come here to steal them flowers?" she asked suspiciously.

The man looked at her with beseeching eyes.

"No, no, Miss, I ain't come to steal no flowers," he said piteously. "I jest thought I'd kinder like ter smell on 'em once, but I wouldn't steal nothin' ef I was starvin'. I fought down thar myself," he added, nodding his head towards the south.

The girl looked at him again with greater interest. "Did you?" she said. "Where did you fight?"

He did not seem to hear her. He kept his eyes fastened with a shrinking yet fascinated eagerness upon her face.

"Be you Thankful Follett?" he enquired timidly.

She nodded.

"An' did you git the money to put up thet moniment all by yourself?" he asked anxiously. "Wasn't it dreadful hard work?"

"Yes," she admitted. "It was. But I'm glad I done it. I'm glad — so glad!"

The man looked at her admiringly; her plain little face quite transfigured with triumphant pride.

"I reckon you're kind o' proud of your father," he faltered.

"Yes, I am," she answered. "He was killed in battle. He was the only man in Eastville thet was, an' I've jest lived to be proud of him ever sence I was a little girl."

One might have fancied the man grew paler — it may have been only the reflected pallor of the growing twilight. Thankful did not notice it.

The tinkle of cow-bells came up from the meadows, there was the smell of freshly ploughed ground in the air; the signs of farm work were everywhere to be seen over the pleasant spring landscape. The tramp looked about him hungrily. "It seems like home," he murmured.

"Perhaps you hev seen father down there?" the girl remarked, enquiringly.

He dropped his eyes. His toes, protruding from his tattered boots, stirred the gravel.

"I guess likely I wouldn't hev known him ef I did see him — I wa'n't there long," he said, evasively. Then he raised his head and looked at her defiantly, although his voice was piteous. "I run away," he said.

Thankful pursed her thin little lips; in all her life *she* had never run away from duty.

"I guess likely you wouldn't hev known him," she said coldly.

"I wa'n't no ways to blame — no ways," he repeated eagerly. "Thar was jest a han'ful on us down by the river, when 'long come the Rebs, fifty ter one, an' I was the last on 'em all ter light out. Then I was kinder feared ter go home. But we wa'n't no ways ter blame — we wa'n't. Say, now, you wouldn't think a man's folks 'd turn ag'in him jest fer runnin' away when he hadn't no fair show, would ye?"

He looked at her pleadingly. Her answer was plain enough in her face, in the hard lines of her little mouth, and in her pitiless young eyes. He turned away with a groan as she simply said:

"'Twould 'a' killed me ef father 'd done that. I'm glad I kin be proud of him. It 'most makes me glad he's dead!"

The tramp's face turned white beneath its coat of tan, he pulled the shapeless hat still further over his brows, the bent figure straightened up and Thankful saw the man before her perform the sole manly action of a worthless life, as he turned his back upon the monument to Ephraim Follett and shuffled away toward the road.

"Good-by," he muttered hoarsely — "an' God bless yer!"

The girl followed the stiff movements of the retreating deserter with a look of bewilderment, just tinged with latent apprehension.

The voice of her mother at her elbow roused her. "Who was thet?" it enquired suspiciously.

"Oh, him?" she answered absently. "He said he was a soldier." Then she glanced with relief at the fresh white shaft and the flowers at its base. "He run away. He wasn't a hero, mother," she said.

But she was wrong. Hobbling stiffly away, hungry and miserable, but for once firm of purpose, the ex-soldier was at last a hero.

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